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ABSTRACT

This study examines the conditions under which Spanish proficiency is associated with self-esteem among Mexican American adolescents. The study questions the validity of a gross relationship between Spanish proficiency and self-esteem and postulates that the link is stronger: (1) for youth whose significant others prefer speaking Spanish; (2) for youth who speak Spanish with parents and friends, as opposed to only with one group; and (3) for students attending schools with a high proportion of minority students. The study used data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 to test the interaction effects. Among the results: (1) Spanish proficiency has a significant positive effect on self-esteem for students who frequently speak Spanish with their fathers, but not for those who spoke Spanish with friends; (2) proficiency's positive effect on self-esteem is greater for those who spoke Spanish with both fathers and friends; and (3) Spanish proficiency is related to self-esteem for students attending schools with high minority rates. In conclusion, Spanish proficiency does not seem grossly related to self-esteem. Rather, it positively influences self-esteem only for Mexican American students who frequently speak Spanish with parents and who attend schools with high rates of minority students. The data suggest that the family is more influential than friends in socializing Mexican American adolescents, and may justify differential policies for home-language maintenance or bilingual programs. (TES)

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A Study of Mexican American 8th Graders

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Spanish Proficiency and Self-esteem:

A Study of Mexican American 8th Graders

Introduction

For language minority groups in Americans, speaking home languages often acts as an expression of cultural identity. Ethnographic studies observed that home languages served minority children in manipulating the detrimental environment, promoting group integration, and raising their self confidence (e.g., Solomon, 1992). For Mexican Americans, Spanish proficiency, as a symbol of the self and the group, may work to promote children's self-concept and self-esteem.

The link between Spanish proficiency and self-concept or self-esteem is interesting for both researchers and practitioners. Self-concept research--despite its historically neglected status--is an important area shared by psychology, sociology, and psychoanalysis (Rosenberg, 1990). Theories and data in this area are applicable to the understanding of social interaction processes, including language use, relating to Mexican Americans' socialization and schooling.

Practically, self-esteem is an important non-cognitive education outcome on its own right (Branden, 1990; Felice, 1981). As a basic human need, self-esteem is a key component of the sense of well-being; and high self-esteem is an important life achievement (Branden, 1990). Further, high self-esteem may be channelled into active learning and consequently generates good school performance (Holly, 1987; Coleman, 1966; Coopersmith, 1967); whereas low self-esteem leads to low academic achievement and deviant behavior (Higgins, 1987;

Steffenhagen, 1987; Simons & Robertson, 1989). It has been a significant issue for practitioners to search ways, including home language education, to help promote minority children's self-esteem.

The link between Spanish proficiency and self-esteem is also relevant to bilingual education policies. A justification for bilingual education programs is that acquisition and maintenance of home languages help racial-ethnic minority children strengthen self-esteem and "empower" them to participate in schooling (e.g., Cummins, 1984). However, it is not clear how Spanish proficiency--one of the targeted outcomes of home language maintenance and bilingual programs--actually enhances Hispanic children's self-esteem.

Drawing on data from a national sample of Mexican American high school students, this study is intended to address two questions: (1) Given other factors equal, is Spanish proficiency grossly related to self-esteem among Mexican American children? and (2) what are the conditions under which Spanish proficiency is associated with Mexican American children's self-esteem?

Prior Research

Most studies of bilingual education and home language instruction have concentrated on outcomes in academic achievement, particularly on English acquisition (Dolson, 1985). Little systematic effort has been made to explore the impact of bilingual education and home language proficiency on non-cognitive education outcomes such as self-esteem. Empirical evidence for this connection is obscure and inconsistent findings were frequently reported (Felice, 1981; Lam, 1992). It is not clear whether or not Spanish proficiency contributes to the growth of self-esteem. Virtually no effort has been made

to specify conditions under which Spanish proficiency affects self-esteem among Mexican American children.

Evaluations of bilingual education programs sometimes have looked at the impact of the program on self-concept, but often resulted contradictory findings. Some evaluation studies did report positive results. For instance, Levy (1978) found the acquisition of positive self-concept related to bilingual education experience in a multicultural setting. In an evaluation of 28 bilingual education programs in Colorado, Stansfield and Hansen (1979) also observed positive self-concept relating to the program participation. Other evaluation efforts, however, indicated either no effect or even negative effect of bilingual experience on self-concept (e.g., Lee, 1975, 1975). Moreover, the validity of bilingual education evaluation studies has been seriously questioned due to their simplistic or flawed methodology (for a review, see Lam, 1992; for a personal account, see Port, 1990).

Systematic research that addressed the issue has also generated inconsistent findings about the effect of Spanish maintenance on self-concept among Mexican Americans. Firme (1969) and Del Buono (1971) reported higher self-esteem of Mexican American students as a result of bilingual instruction. Long and Padilla (1971) found that Chicano college students from homes where Spanish was frequently spoken had higher self-esteem than those from less Spanish-speaking homes.

The literature, however, also contains inconclusive or negative reports on this connection. In a classic study, Coleman and his colleagues (1966) documented that, among a national sample of Mexican Americans, Spanish maintenance was associated with poor psychological attributes, including lower self-esteem and motivation. Based on his survey data, Garcia (1981) suggested

that the effect of Spanish speaking on self confidence among Mexican American college students was complex and the positive effect he found in his analysis was inconclusive. Conceptualizing Spanish speaking as a negative indicator of Mexican American acculturation, Ortiz and Arce (1984) reported an inverse relationship between Spanish use and self-esteem among a sample of Mexican Americans from the Southwest U.S. The negative relationship holds regardless sex, educational attainment, and income. In a study of psychological health relating to self-esteem, Vega (1980) reported a correlation between Spanish speaking in interview and high risk of psychological disorder. Recent critics on bilingual education observed that, though ethnic identity and cultural pride may be promoted via bilingual education, language separation may also "reinforces the feelings of being different, of being a perpetual outsider" (Porter, 1990, p.35). The implication is that native language use without English proficiency has a negative impact on self-concept and self-esteem among minority children.

In brief, the available information raises questions about the existence of a gross relationship between Spanish proficiency and self-esteem among Mexican American children. The inconsistence of findings in the literature implies that the relationship between Spanish speaking and self-esteem is more complex than that a simple linear, additive model can accommodate (Ortiz & Arce, 1984).

Conceptual Framework

The complexity of the relationship merits a scrutiny of conditional factors that alter the relationship between Spanish proficiency and self-esteem. The interaction effects between Spanish proficiency and socioeconomic

status and sex have been explored (e.g., Ortiz & Arce 1984). However, social interaction circumstances, which are crucial in determining the meanings of Spanish proficiency relating to self, are largely ignored in prior research. Social interaction factors, rather than structure factors (e.g., race or SES), should be particularly significant in considering self-esteem because as a social construction, self-esteem is highly sensitive to the influence of the individual's immediate reference groups.[1] This study attempts to identify the role of three conditions in changing the effect of Spanish proficiency on self-esteem among Mexican American youth. Conceptualized as social interaction factors, these conditions are: (1) frequency of actual speaking Spanish by Mexican American children with significant others (parents or friends); (2) congruence of Spanish preference between different groups of significant others (parents and friends); and (3) racial-ethnic composition of the social settings (the school) in which Mexican Americans children act.

The self is the individual known to the individual in a socially determined frame of reference (Murphy, 1947; Newcomb, 1950). It is an abstraction about one's attributes, behaviors, and capacities formed during social interaction. Self-esteem, as one aspect of self conception, is a personal judgement one makes of his own worth (Coopersmith, 1967). Self-esteem is formed and reformed under the influence of on-going interaction with others (Faunce, 1984; Gergen, 1965, 1971). Of particular influence to the

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[1] Some researchers suggest that general racial-ethnic differences in self concept or self esteem do not exist (e.g., Rosenberg & Simons, 1971); others report inconsistent findings about the difference (e.g., Coleman, 1966; Harris & Stokes, 1978). Studies specifically comparing Mexican Americans with other groups also failed to find cross-group differences in self esteem (e.g., Jensen, White & Galliher, 1982; Frazier & DeBlassie, 1982). An implication for research seems to be that it is more crucial to examine the effects of local interaction conditions on self than to simply compare group differences across racial or class categories.

child's self-esteem is the interaction with significant others, such as parents and peers, who constitute "the only existent and only conceivable world" for the child (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p.134). In this socially constructed world, the language spoken by family members and friends is significant in shaping children's self identity. Beyond the communication function, the language serves to define the child's reference group and to determine his self conception (Christian, 1976). As a powerful symbolic system, Spanish used by significant others may change the values held by the large society and acts as a mechanism for Mexican American children to manipulate the alienating environment, at least expressively.

The effect of Spanish speaking with significant others is crucial in linking the child's Spanish skills and his self-esteem: the preference of and value for Spanish held by significant others sanction the child's behavior. If the child's Spanish performance matches expectations of significant others, he will gain approval by significant others; as a result, his self-esteem will be strengthened. In contrast, if the child fails to match the expectation of significant others in home language use, he may end up with disapproval by significant others, consequently his self-esteem will suffer. The child's self-esteem mirrors the evaluation about him made by significant others. If significant others prefer Spanish to English and the child speaks Spanish well, he is likely to receive positive evaluation in this regard. In reflecting such an evaluation, his self-esteem may be boosted by his Spanish proficiency. In contrast, if significant other do not value Spanish, then Spanish proficiency will not be an important matter in their evaluation of the child; as a result, the child's self-esteem will not be affected by his Spanish proficiency. In brief, although the preference of Spanish speaking

may not directly influence the child's self-esteem, it influences the effect of the child's Spanish proficiency on his self-esteem.

Frequent Spanish speaking with significant others often reflects a preference of, or, a high value for the language held by speakers. Thus, frequency of Spanish speaking can be an indicator of value for Spanish. Hypothesis 1 states:

> Given other conditions equal, for Mexican American students who frequently speak Spanish with parents and peers, the relationship between Spanish proficiency and self-esteem is stronger than it is for those who rarely speak Spanish with parents and peers.

Moreover, if <u>all</u> significant others frequently speak Spanish, the <u>congruence</u> of their language preference may have additional effect on the link between Hispanic proficiency and self-esteem. Thus, hypothesis 2 is:

> For Mexican American children who frequently speak Spanish with both parents and friends, Spanish proficiency is related to self-esteem to a greater extent than it is for those who frequently speak Spanish only with parents or only with friends.

Finally, the school racial-ethnic minority composition may be an important social factor affecting the association between Spanish proficiency and self-esteem. In schools where racial-ethnic minority students dominate the student population, usually Spanish is more valued by Mexican American students. In light of the above conceptualization, hypothesis 3 is:

For Mexican American students who attend schools with high proportion of minority students, Spanish proficiency is related to self-esteem to a greater extent than it is for those who attend schools with low proportion of minority students.

Data Source and Analysis Approach

Sample

The study draws on data from the National Education longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) conducted by the National Opinion Research Center under contract with the National Center for Educational Statistics (1990). NELS:88 is the first wave of a longitudinal survey of the 1988 eighth grader cohort in the U.S. The sample, including 24,599 students, was drawn by a 2-stage stratified probability design. The sample excluded specific types of students, such as those who were mentally handicapped and who were not proficient in English. The exclusion of students who were not proficient in English acts to hold students' English skills at a minimum proficient level so that it is not important to control for English proficiency in our analysis.

For this study, I extracted from the total sample a susbsample of 1,853 respondents who were identified as Mexican, Mexican American, or chicano students and who attended public schools in the U.S. Because of the homogeneity of this group, the unweighted data were used for analysis.

Measurement

Spanish proficiency is measured by student response to four questions asking about how well the student can understand, speak, read, and write in

Spanish (a 5-level scale for each question). To generate a single variable, the number of "very well" responses to the four questions is used as the indicator of Spanish proficiency in the analysis.

Seven questions about self worthiness were asked to students, each with a 4-level scale (strongly agree through strongly disagree). Self-esteem is measured by the standardized score of the average of responses to the questions.[2] For Mexican American students, the mean score is lower than that of the total sample (see Table 1).

Three conditional factors were used in the analysis, namely, frequencies of speaking Spanish with father and with friends, father-friend congruence in Spanish speaking, and school racial-ethnic composition. Respondents were asked how often Spanish was spoken with parents and with friends, respectively. The responses were coded into a 4-level scale (always or most of the time, about half the time, sometimes, and never). The two frequency variables were used to construct an indicator of fathers-friends congruence of Spanish preference with three categories: Spanish was "always" spoken with both fathers and friends, spoken only with fathers or only with friends, and spoken with neither father nor friends.

School racial composition was in the original NELS:88 dataset a 7-category measure, which makes too few cases in some categories to warrant statistic power of separate tests. Thus, the variable was recoded into three larger categories, i.e., minority students rate 0% through 40%, 41% through 90%, and greater than 90%.

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[2]The 7-question instrument is called self concept in the NELS:88 code book (NCES, 1990, Appendix D, p.9). The seven questions, however, specifically address self esteem rather than a comprehensive measure of self concept.

A number of variables that are theoretically related to self-esteem but not of the focus in this study were controlled for in the analysis. These are: family socioeconomic status, sex, academic achievement, school experience, and status among peers. Family socioeconomic status was a composite score generated by NELS:88 based on parents' education and occupation and family income. Sex is also a composite dichotomous score constructed in the original data set (respondents' missing cases were replaced with data from school roster). Academic achievement, also from the original NELS:88 data, is indicated by averaged, weighted, self reported grades over the four subject areas (English, math, science, and social studies). Status among peers includes four variables in the original data, derived from responses to questions about whether the respondent was seen in the class as athletic, good student, important, and trouble maker.[3] Response "very" was coded as one and others zero. The variable of school experience was constructed by counting negative responses to a set of six questions asking about students' experience of disciplinary problems and penalties at school in the given semester (e.g., being sent to office for misbehaving, receiving warning about attendance, and so on). The resulted 0-6 scale reflects the quality of student school experience: zero means that all the six problems were experienced, whereas six indicates that none of the problems were encountered.

Analytic Approach

[3]The first question (seen as popular) in the set was dropped because the response was highly correlated with that of the question "seen as good student."

To identify the variable relationship between Spanish proficiency and self-esteem under the influence of frequency of Spanish speaking, the study calls for tests of interaction effects between frequency of Spanish speaking and Spanish proficiency on self-esteem. Such a frequency-proficiency interaction is analyzed in two stages.

The first stage of analysis is to separately test the relationship at different levels of frequency of Spanish speaking with ordinary least square (OLS) regression models. Controlling for other variables (sex, SES, school experience, peer status, and average grade), self-esteem is regressed on Spanish proficiency at the four levels of frequency of Spanish speaking with fathers and with friends. The hypotheses is considered supported if the regression coefficient of Spanish proficiency is greater in magnitude and statistically significant at high frequent level of Spanish speaking than it is at low level of frequency.

The second stage of analysis is to test the significance of the frequency-proficiency interaction effect (the difference in the relationship) identified in the first stage of analysis, again, with other variables controlled. The two frequency variables (with father and with friends) are recoded into two dummy variables with one indicating "often" speaking Spanish and zero "not often." Two production terms will be generated by multiplying Spanish proficiency with each of the dummy measures of frequency and be entered into the equation as additional independent variables. Their b weights are interpreted as the difference in slope of two regression lines (for the group that often speak Spanish and the group that do not often). The interaction effects is considered significant if the b weights of the product terms are statistically significant (Aiken and West, 1991, p.125). Such a

result can be seen as a support to the hypotheses that self-esteem is affected by Spanish proficiency only when Spanish is frequently spoken with significant others.

To test the effect of father-friend congruence in Spanish speaking in changing the effect of Spanish proficiency on self-esteem, same strategies are used. First, to identify the variability of the effect of Spanish proficiency on self-esteem, OLS regressions are conducted in each of the three categories of the congruence variable. If the hypothesized variability is found, another regression will be done to test the significance of the interaction. Two interaction terms will be included into the equation. They are to be generated by multiplying Spanish proficiency with two dummy variables, which reflect two contrasts: one is between the congruent group (those speaking Spanish with both fathers and friends) and the non-speaker group (those speaking to neither father nor friends); the other is between the incongruent group (those speaking only with father or only with friends) and the non-speaker group. A joint test of the two interaction terms will tell us the significance of the overall interaction effect between Spanish proficiency and father-friend congruence on self-esteem (Aiken & West, 1991).

Likewise, the interaction effect between school minority composition and Spanish proficiency on self-esteem is tested in two stages. First, tests of proficiency effect are done at three levels of minority composition. Second, if the hypothesized difference in proficiency effect exists across the levels of minority composition, then the significance of the effect will be tested by regressing self-esteem on a production term constructed by multiplying the proficiency variable with a dichotomous variable of minority composition (with minority rate greater than 90% as one, others as zero). Interpretation of the

result will be the same as that of the test of proficiency-frequency interactions.

Findings

Descriptive statistics for the variable of self-esteem and independent variables are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

To provide an overall pattern of the relationship between the two variables, self-esteem is regressed on Spanish proficiency, adjusting five factors that are relevant to self-esteem (sex, SES, school experience, peer status, and average grade) but are not examined in this study. The results (see Table 2) indicate that the relation between Spanish proficiency and self-esteem is statistically significant but substantially weak ($b=3.24$, $beta=.06$, $p<.01$). Both the zero-order correlation and the multiple regression suggest that, as assumed, the gross, direct association between self-esteem and Spanish proficiency is indeed minimum.

Insert Table 2 about here

To identify the hypothetical conditions under which Spanish proficiency impacts Mexican American students' self-esteem, I separately examined the effect of Spanish proficiency and self-esteem across the four levels of frequency of speaking Spanish with fathers and friends, three levels of father-friend congruency in Spanish speaking, and three levels of school

minority rates, while controlling for the five variables (sex, SES, school experience, peer status, and average grade). The analysis involves a total of 14 equations (see Table 3).

The four equations at the levels of frequency of speaking Spanish with father reveal that Spanish proficiency has a significant effect ($b=6.37$, $p<.01$) on self-esteem only in the category of speaking Spanish "always or most of the time." In other words, for Mexican American students who spoke Spanish frequently with fathers, an increase of one level of their Spanish proficiency is associated with more than six points increase in self-esteem score, holding other variables constant. At the lower levels of frequency, Spanish proficiency has no significant effect on self-esteem. For the sake of easy interpretation, in the subsequent significance tests of interaction effects, this variable is dichotomized, with one for those who always spoke Spanish with fathers and zero for the others.

Insert Table 3 about here

The four models at levels of frequency of speaking Spanish with friends reveal a pattern that seems somewhat different, but still compatible to our hypothesis. At the two middle levels of frequency, Spanish proficiency has a statistically significant impact on self-esteem ($b=7.09$, $p<.05$ and $b=4.80$, $p<.05$, respectively). At the "always" and "never" levels, Spanish proficiency has no significant effect on self-esteem, though the magnitude of b weight of Spanish proficiency at "always" level ($b=4.20$, $p=.10$) is close to that at the "sometimes" level. Perhaps due to the smaller sample size ($n=180$) at the

"always" level, the b weight is not statistically significant. The proficiency effect is, however, smallest in the "never" category of the frequency variable (b=1.94, p=.38). It seems that a difference in proficiency effect happens between those who never spoke Spanish with friends and those who spoke to some extent, a finding not conflicting to our hypothesis. In next stage of analysis, this variable is recoded into a dichotomous variable to represent this pattern: those who never spoke Spanish are coded zero, the others are coded as one.

Self-esteem is also regressed on Spanish proficiency in three categories of father-friend congruency in Spanish speaking (congruent, non-congruent, and not speaking Spanish at all), again, with the five variables controlled. The results show that, as expected, the positive effect of Spanish proficiency on self-esteem is greater (b=5.62, $p<.01$) for those who spoke Spanish with both fathers and friends than it is for those who spoke Spanish only with fathers or only with friends (b=3.74, $p<.05$). Also as expected, among those who did not speak Spanish with either group, Spanish proficiency has no effect on self-esteem at all (b=.33, not significant).

Same regression analyses were done in the three categories of school minority rates (less than 40 %, 41 through 90 %, and greater than 90%). Results suggest that as hypothesized, for those who attended schools with highest rates of minority students, the effect of Spanish proficiency on self-esteem is strongest (b=7.306, $p<.01$). On the other hand, among those who attended schools with lowest minority rates, the effect of Spanish proficiency on self-esteem is greater than it is among those who attended schools in the middle level of minority rates. Despite this anomaly, the pattern holds that high rates of minority students conditions a strong positive association

between Spanish proficiency and self-esteem. In later significance tests of the interaction effect, the variable of minority rates is recoded into a dichotomy with one indicating the rates higher than 90 percent, and zero otherwise.

To test the significance of the interaction effects between Spanish proficiency and (1) frequency of speaking Spanish with fathers, (2) frequency of speaking Spanish with friends, and (3) school minority composition, respectively, three production terms are constructed by multiplying Spanish proficiency with (1) the dichotomous variable of frequency of speaking Spanish with fathers, (2) the dichotomous variable of frequency of speaking Spanish with friends, and (3) the dichotomous measure of school minority rates.

To test the interaction between father-friend congruency and Spanish proficiency, additional two production terms are to be generated (for a relevant methodological discussion, see Aiken and West, 1991, p.116-125). First, the congruency variable is recoded into two dummy variables, taking the category of "non-speaker" as the comparison group: one dummy variable compares those who spoke Spanish with both father and friends (assigned a value of 1) and those who spoke no Spanish with either group (assigned of a value 0); the other compares those who spoke Spanish only with fathers or only with friends (assigned a value of 1) and those who spoke no Spanish with either group (assigned a value of 0). Second, two production terms are derived by multiplying Spanish proficiency with the two dummy variables.

Four OLS regression equations are produced for the significance test of Spanish proficiency interaction with the four conditional factors, namely, frequency of Spanish speaking with father, frequency of Spanish speaking with friends, father-friend congruency in speaking Spanish, and school minority

rates. In each equation, the production term(s) are entered after the entrance of the five controlled independent variables, the variable of Spanish proficiency, and the conditional factor(s) (dichotomized or dummy coded). The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 is about here

Several points can be made from the analysis. One, while the proficiency-frequency (with friends) interaction effect is not significant (b=2.154, p=.93, the R^2 increment due to the interaction is virtually nil), the proficient-frequency (with father) is significant (b=5.909, p>.05, the R^2 increment due to the interaction is .003, p<.05). Two, the proficiency-congruency interaction is not statistically significant since the effects of the two interaction terms are not statistically significant (b=5.630, r=.071 and b=2.983, r=.321, respectively, the R^2 increment due to the interaction is .001, p=.196). Finally, the proficiency-minority interaction is statistically significant (b=5.733, p<.05, the R^2 increment due to the interactions is .002, p<.05).

In each equation, however, the effect of Spanish proficiency that was statistically significant before the entrance of the interaction term(s) becomes statistically insignificant and much smaller in magnitude. This finding suggests that when the hypothesized interactions are considered in the models, the association between Spanish proficiency and self-esteem--which was very modest even without modeling the interactions--no longer exists. It seems that as hypothesized, Spanish proficiency does not aggregatively promote Mexican American children's self-esteem; rather, it positively influences

self-esteem only for Mexican American students who frequently speak Spanish with fathers, and who attend schools with high rates of minority students. However, the frequency of speaking Spanish with friends does not seem significant in changing the effect of Spanish proficiency on self-esteem; relatedly, the father-friend congruency in Spanish speaking is not very important in changing the relationship either.

Discussion

The hypothesis about the role of frequent speaking Spanish with significant others as a process factor in connecting Spanish proficiency and self-esteem of Mexican American students is partly supported by the NELS:88 data. First, as expected, Spanish proficiency does not indiscriminately enhance Mexican American students' self-esteem. Second, frequent Spanish speaking with father allows Spanish proficiency to promote self-esteem; whereas frequent speaking Spanish with friends is less important in affecting this connection. Finally, as hypothesized, a school setting with a high proportion of racial-ethnic minority students facilitates the function of Spanish proficiency in promoting self-esteem of Mexican American children.

It is difficult to explain why speaking Spanish with father is more significant than speaking with friends in influencing the association between Spanish skills and self-esteem. Since the relevant data are not available, we cannot directly examine the two groups' values for Spanish language and their different influences on the respondent's self-esteem. Speculatively, perhaps, the family plays a more influential role than friends do in socializing Mexican adolescents. Further, Mexican parents usually represent a more traditional ethnic perspective than peers do in the socialization process.

Ethnographic research has documented that Mexican Americans have a particularly cohesive family organization, which functions to provide "funds of knowledge" entrenched in traditional Chicano culture (Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992). The Mexican American family has been shown to be a powerful force in culture conflicts with the dominant society and its institutions such as school (Bernal, Saenz & Knight, 1991). Peers, on the other hand, may be more loosely tied to one another and more diverse in social attitudes and cultural values, and hence, may be less relevant in regulating the influence of ethnic language use upon self-concept for Mexican Americans. Such a speculation awaits future research to examine.

The general effect of Spanish maintenance in realizing positive non-cognitive outcomes such as self-esteem for Mexican American students appears to be very limited, if not entirely nonexistent. The differential effect of Spanish proficiency on self-esteem among Mexican American children implies that probably a differential policy in home language maintenance or bilingual programs should be considered. For instance, for Mexican Americans (either parents or children) who choose to maintain Spanish and do frequently speak Spanish, efforts should be made to help them achieve the goal; whereas for those who rarely use Spanish or who volunteer to study only in English, efforts should focus on speeding up their English acquisition rather than, as an institutionalized routine, be diffused into bilingual programs. Also, in schools that enroll a large portion of Hispanic American students, resources should be used to provide home language education; whereas in schools with low rates of Hispanic children, the limited resource may be better used in concentrating on English-based instruction and learning.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variables	Coding/range	Mean	s.d.	case
Self-esteem	scale (-282, 123)	-9.44	65.94	1832
Spanish proficiency	scale (1,4)	.85	1.32	1853
Spanish speaking frequency to father	1=always 2=about half time 3=sometimes 4=never	3.83	2.79	1853
Spanish speaking frequency to friends	1=always 2=about half time 3=sometimes 4=never	4.17	2.52	1853
School minority rates	1=40% or less 2=41-90% 3=91% or more	1.92	.72	1771
School experience	scale (0,6)	4.12	1.91	1853
Popular	0=no 1=yes	.16	.36	1737
Athletic	0=no 1=yes	.20	.40	1722
Good student	0=no 1=yes	.33	.47	1751
Important	0=no 1=yes	.20	.40	1719
Trouble maker	0=no 1=yes	.07	.26	1720
Sex	0=female 1=male	.48	.50	1853
SES	scale(-2970,1629)	-742.25	675.95	1849
Father-friend congruence in Spanish speaking	1=both father/friends 2=only father or friends 3=neither father or friends	2.25	.78	1853

Table 2. OLS regression of self-esteem on Spanish proficiency and confounding variables.

Variables	b	SE	Beta
Sex (male)	28.10**	3.04	.21
SES	.01**	.00	.07
Average grade	1.56**	.23	.17
School experience	2.44*	.97	.06
Spanish proficiency	3.26**	1.12	.06
Peer status			
Athletic	9.30*	3.87	.05
Good student	16.05**	3.58	.11
Important	20.11**	4.00	.12
Trouble	-22.49**	5.89	-.08
Adjusted R^2	.17**	59.77	

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 3. Separated OLS regression of self-esteem on Spanish proficiency at levels of conditional factors (frequency of Spanish speaking with fathers and with friends, father-friend congruency in Spanish speaking, and school minority student rates), controlling for sex, SES, average grade, school experience, and status among peers.

Models	b	SE	Adjusted R^2	Case
Total sample	3.268*	1.125	.171**	1673
Speak Spanish with father				
Always	6.370**	1.829	.147**	428
Half the time	-.122	3.032	.182**	193
sometimes	-1.691	3.096	.200**	364
never	.814	3.085	.262**	266
Speak Spanish with friends				
Always	4.204	2.587	.079**	180
Half the time	7.092*	3.056	.186**	164
sometimes	4.801*	2.196	.185**	478
never	1.938	2.216	.217**	501
Congruence in speaking Spanish				
Congruent	5.621**	2.008	.121**	357
Non-congruent	3.741*	1.855	.221**	536
Non-speaker	.326	2.425	.172**	780
School minority rates				
less than 40%	3.286	2.313	.168**	504
41-90%	.193	1.699	.153**	754
greater than 90%	7.306**	2.113	.240**	349

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 4. OLS regression of self-esteem on Spanish proficiency and interaction terms, controlling for sex, SES, average grade, school experience, and status among peers.

Variables	Without interaction terms b	beta	With interaction terms) b	beta
Spanish proficiency	3.278**	.066	.984	.019
Always speak Spanish with father	-.093	-6.192E-4	-7.691	-.051
Proficiency*frequency	-	-	5.909*	.095
Adjusted R^2	.170**	-	.173**	-
R^2 change	-	-	.003*	-
Spanish proficiency	3.601*	.073	2.187	.044
Speak Spanish with friends	-3.258	-.025	-4.829	-.037
Proficiency*frequency	-	-	2.154	.039
Adjusted R^2	.171**	-	.171	
R^2 change	-	-	.000	-
Spanish Proficiency	3.582**	.07265	.514	.010
Father-friend congruent	-2.136	-.013	-7.600	-.047
Father-friend incongruent	-4.777	-.034	-5.749	-.041
Proficiency*congruent	-	-	5.630	.085
proficiency*incongruent	-	-	2.983	.041
Adjusted R^2	.171**	-	.172**	-
R^2 change	-	-	.001	-
Spanish proficiency	3.202**	.065	1.811	.037
School minority rates (>90%)	4.453	.028	-1.385	-.009
Proficiency*minority	-	-	5.733*	.068
Adjusted R^2	.171**	-	.173**	-
R^2 change	-	-	.002*	-

*p<.05 **p<.01

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